

University of Dundee

University of Dundee, School of Life Sciences

Stanley-Wall, Nicola; Cameron, Amy; Hardee, Erin; Martin, Morag

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University of Dundee School of Life Sciences



Cover image: Andrew Lim

Public engagement with research strategy

Our Vision

Public engagement with research is essential to our ambition to transform lives through the sharing of knowledge. Public engagement enables researchers to connect with society for mutual benefit. In the School of Life Sciences, we are committed to creating a culture of curiosity, confidence and engagement with science. By building on our partnerships we aim to widen participation in science and to show the relevance of life sciences research for everyone.

We commit to delivering this strategy over the next five years.



We have four main aims:

- 1 Build on our creative partnerships to deliver a high quality, innovative engagement programme. This will inspire participation in and understanding of our research, making science relevant for everyone.
 - 2 Engage a diverse range of people with our research.
 - 3 Consult with our local communities to widen our reach and meet their needs.
 - 4 Promote and support a culture of active participation in public engagement within our life sciences community.
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Our Context

Public engagement is at the core of our University's strategic priorities. These are to:

- > Advance our values
- > Intensify our impact locally and globally
- > Embed interdisciplinary research and teaching
- > Grow and diversify our student community
- > Enhance university performance and reputation
- > Enable our people to flourish
- > Embrace One Dundee Approach
- > Deliver sustainable ambition

The participation of our research and non-research staff and students in public engagement is essential. This will engender a culture of curiosity, confidence and engagement with scientific research by the public.

We offer a variety of opportunities for our staff and students to develop their public engagement skills. We want to build, develop and learn from what is distinctive about our public engagement activities. We will embed models for engagement that can enable our team to enhance the impact of their work.

Key priority areas include:

- > Engaging with local schools including career-long professional learning opportunities in life sciences research for local teachers.
- > Enabling access to science for all ages particularly those who have not previously engaged with science.
- > Continuing to develop and roll out distinctive outreach events. These include hands-on activities that can be shared with the wider research community, nationally and internationally.
- > Building on our collaborative partnerships within the University and beyond to continue to delivering innovative public engagement models.
- > Rewarding and recognising all our staff and students who participate in public engagement, reinforcing the view that it is an integral component of what we do.

A delivery document will be written to provide details on how we plan to achieve our strategy aims.



Image: Peachy Snaps



Image: Dominic Younger

Our approach

We will:

- Ensure that our engagement programme aligns with the world-class expertise of the School of Life Sciences.
- Enrich our public engagement programme by continuing collaborations with creative organisations, community groups, and local schools by:
 - building on our existing creative partnerships to create innovative public engagement projects. Our partners include Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, the University Botanic Gardens and external cultural and community organisations such as Leisure and Culture Dundee and Dundee Contemporary Arts.
 - expanding sustainable networks between local schools, community groups and Life Sciences staff and students involved in public engagement.
 - working with organisations including the Scottish Schools Education Resource Centre to ensure our activities align with existing support for science and technology education across Scotland and the Curriculum for Excellence.
 - providing support for career-long professional development for local teachers. This will increase confidence, aspirations and encourage greater participation in science by school children.
 - developing, implementing and managing a work placement programme for school pupils. We will target pupils from traditionally unengaged backgrounds.
- Encourage collaboration and share best practice by acting as a point of contact for all School public engagement activities.
- Work with the School Health and Safety team to support and collate all risk assessments relating to public engagement with research activities.
- Work with the school management team to further embed public engagement in the School culture and operational plans.
- Work with Human Resources to further embed reward and recognition for public engagement within the School policies.
- Work with experts in evaluation to develop the best methods for assessing our activities. We will actively respond to feedback to ensure best practice.
- Highlight the advantages to the individual that taking part in public engagement can have for their professional development and career progression.
- Celebrate excellence in public engagement and support colleagues in their activities through nominations for internal and external prizes and awards.
- Encourage participation in externally recognised schemes such as the University's Dundee Plus Award and the STEM Ambassadors Scheme.
- Highlight public engagement projects for inclusion in Research Excellence Framework case studies.
- Share our knowledge with the wider engagement community through conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals and by other dissemination methods.



Image: Erin Hardee

Our dedicated resources

We will provide:

- A school-wide support structure for public engagement that links into the central public engagement team. This includes:
 - an Academic Lead for Public Engagement
 - a Research Strategy & Development Officer
 - a Schools Outreach Officer
 - a Public Engagement & Communications Officer
 - a Communications Secretary

In addition:

- Each of our divisions, units and centres will have a Public Engagement Champion.
- The Wellcome Centre for Anti-Infectives Research is also supported by its own Public Engagement Manager.
- Public engagement will also be supported through the LifeSpace Science Art Research Gallery with curatorial and operational management provided jointly by Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design and the School of Life Sciences.
- A coordinated strategy for public engagement that meets the needs and requirements of our divisions, units and centres. This document will complement their own specific engagement strategies.
- Professional support and guidance to encourage all our staff and postgraduate students to be involved in public engagement by:
 - expanding and sustaining public engagement training for Life Sciences staff and students that develop skills and confidence when undertaking engagement activities.
 - maintaining public engagement training for all incoming postgraduate students during their induction period.
 - offering public engagement opportunities to the Life Sciences undergraduate community by providing formal training and access to participate in events.
- A regular forum to discuss public engagement activities with representation across the School and University to enable cohesion in our activities.
- Agenda items for public engagement at the School Research Committee and divisional management meetings to ensure the sharing of information through the School.
- Regular updates on public engagement opportunities for staff and students.
- A monthly drop-in session in the School with the Schools Outreach Officer and Public Engagement & Communications Officer for informal enquiries.





Our dedicated resources *continued*

- Funding for public engagement activities and training.
- Support for researchers when including engagement activities in external grant funding applications.
- A database of activities and participants.
- A suite of online resources to support those undertaking engagement activities.
This includes:
 - planning checklists
 - evaluations strategies
 - risk assessments
 - navigation to external resources available for supporting and funding public engagement

We will also:

- Represent the School of Life Sciences at public engagement conferences and events, and maintain regular contact with external organisations and funding bodies.
- Undertake regular reviews of progress in public engagement policy.

Closing Remarks

As we continue to develop our strategy we value input from our School, the wider University and our communities.

“We are proud that our public engagement activities and infrastructure have recently been awarded a faculty Gold Engage Watermark from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). It demonstrates that we are a beacon of excellence in this area of activity and the rigorous process has enabled us to recognize our strengths and highlight areas for development. This strategy will guide us as a School to push forward and continue to be a leader in public engagement.”

Professor Nicola Stanley-Wall, Academic Lead for Public Engagement
December 2017



Contact us by email:
SLS-PublicEngagement@dundee.ac.uk